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TAGS: [PREL](#) [ARF](#) [EAID](#) [ASEAN](#) [BM](#) [VM](#)

SUBJECT: GVN WILL SUPPORT ARF DISASTER PREPAREDNESS STATEMENT, BUT
NOT TAKE THE LEAD

REF: STATE 61440

¶1. (SBU) Summary. The GVN will support an ARF Statement on Regional Disaster Preparedness, but cannot take the lead due to resource constraints. Burma was cited as an example of why such preparedness is needed, and also why an ASEAN member should take the lead. End Summary

¶2. (SBU) On June 13, poloff discussed reftel points about issuing an ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Ministerial Statement on Regional Disaster Preparedness with MFA ASEAN Department Assistant Director Vu Ho. Ho said the GVN would have nothing against the proposed statement, however, his ministry has neither the time or personnel to deal with drafting the statement. He said his department is currently swamped with ASEAN Charter-related taskings. Ho thought the statement might proceed best by following the "ASEAN Way," with either current ASEAN chair Singapore or upcoming chair Thailand taking the lead.

¶3. (SBU) Ho commented that Vietnam supports efforts to prepare for disasters with a focus on humanitarian relief, not political advantage. He liked the idea of the statement and a disaster response action plan. He cited two hindrances to disaster relief following Cyclone Nargis. First was the issue of Burma's lack of confidence in donor countries' intentions; when GVN officials urged Burma to allow international relief efforts, the Burmese regime replied that it could not trust outsiders because of previous criticism. Burmese officials also commented on the presence of U.S. and French naval ships off Burma's coast, saying the GOB could not allow foreign military to cross its borders. According to Ho, the second obstacle was the Burmese government structure; every decision had to be cleared by "the man at the top," which took too long.

¶4. (SBU) Ho suggested that Thailand will be a productive ASEAN chairman. It will want to elevate its image in ASEAN circles. He also mentioned that the U.S. proposed ARF vision statement is not moving ahead and will still need lengthy discussion. The GVN is waiting for Singapore to send the draft. Finally, Ho mentioned that Vietnam is preparing a submission to the ARF annual security outlook for the first time in seven years. He said the Ministry of Defense is the lead GVN drafting agency and that it will be submitted to Singapore and published in July.

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